DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 335 047 IR 053 677

AUTHOR McCulley, Lucretia; Ream, Dan
TITLE Public Use of Academic Libraries in Virginia.
REPORT NO ISSN-0273-3951
PUB DATE Jun 88
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Journal Articles (080) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
JOURNAL CIT Virginia Librarian; v34 n2 p9-12 Apr-Jun 1988

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Libraries; *Access to Information; Fees; Higher Education; Interlibrary Loans; Library Circulation; *Library Services; Online Searching; Private Colleges; *Public Service; State Surveys; State Universities; *Use Studies
IDENTIFIERS *Library Policy; Virginia

ABSTRACT

The directors of 40 academic libraries in Virginia were surveyed to obtain information on their practices relating to public access, services, and fees in their libraries. Complete or partial responses were received from 21 libraries in private institutions and 14 from state-supported institutions. These responses indicate that all of the responding libraries offer the public open access to their building without charge, although two require an application process. All 18 of the respondents that offer online services to the public charge the online cost of the search, and two of them add an additional fee. Members of the general public are allowed to borrow materials without charge by 21 of the libraries, while an additional 8 libraries allow the public to borrow for a fee, which ranges from $5 to a high of $700. Sixteen of the libraries offer interlibrary loan services to the general public. Reasons for charging public users for services were given as partial or full cost recovery, and limiting their use of the library. Numbers of the general public borrowing materials from academic libraries were reported as ranging from less than 50 to 4,000. The most frequent types of users were ranked as: (1) students from other colleges or universities; (2) high school students; (3) business persons; (4) alumni; (5) public or private school teachers; and (6) recreational users. Only three reported offering special privileges to corporate or business users, and only nine claimed that use by the general public has had a negative impact. Advantages of offering services to the public are cited as good community relations, with services open to high school students serving as a good recruitment tool. A copy of the questionnaire with a tally of the responses is appended together with a list of the participating institutions. (16 notes/references) (BBM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Deborah M. Trocchi
Virginia Library Assoc.
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PUBLIC USE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN VIRGINIA

Lucretia McCulley
Director of Public Services
Boatwright Library
University of Richmond
and
Dan Ream
Head of Reference Services
University Library Services
Virginia Commonwealth University

ED335047

Introduction

Although often thought of as the domain of public libraries, providing access and services to the general public has long been an important, and sometimes controversial, issue for academic libraries. State and national policies have been suggested, but none have yet provided any definitive guidance to academic libraries in Virginia, leaving each institution free to find its own way of dealing with access and services to anyone outside its primary clientele of students, faculty, and staff. As the Association of College and Research Libraries' 1975 *Access Policy Guidelines* states,

> Institutional goals and circumstances are highly variable, making it both unworkable and undesirable to be prescriptive in approaching the question of community access to library collections and services.[1]

In recent years, our professional literature has made known a number of new programs academic libraries have developed for dealing with its non-primary clientele. Most frequently these have involved programs for high school student use of academic libraries or the development of fee-based services to individual or corporate users. ACRL now even includes a discussion group, Fee-based Information Service Centers in Academic Libraries, whose programs at ALA conferences attract large audiences. Simultaneously, other academic libraries have decided that access and services to the general public have resulted in depletion of services to their primary clientele, noise and behavior problems, and depletion of collections. Several of these libraries have taken steps to reduce or eliminate public access to their collections and services. Whether imposing new limitations or developing new programs, the common thread that links these efforts is an attempt to gain better control of public use of academic libraries.

As the authors participated in discussions of access and services for the general public in our own academic libraries, we found it desirable to consider the practices of other academic libraries in Virginia. ACRL's *Access Policy Guidelines* points out that, "libraries are obligated to be well-informed about the policies and resources of other libraries in the area in order to make appropriate referrals."[2]

Using the *American Library Directory*, we identified forty private or state-supported academic libraries in Virginia whose schools offered a bachelor's degree. These forty libraries' directors were surveyed by mail about their practices concerning public access, services, and fees in their libraries (See Appendix A). Thirty-five complete or partial responses were received and will be reported here.

The value of this report is two-fold: first, it should help all librarians in the state be better aware of the *variety* of services offered or not offered by Virginia's academic libraries to their non-primary clientele and thus encourage more accurate referrals to those libraries; second, academic librarians may be able to benefit from seeing the options for such service that their peer institutions practice and use this information if they decide to revise their own policies.

Each academic librarian can identify their peer institutions in this survey. The most obvious criterion may be whether a library is state-supported or private. Rural or urban location may warrant consideration as well.

Survey Results

Of the forty surveys mailed, thirty-five were returned (see Appendix B), a response rate of 87%. Twenty-one respondents are part of private institutions and fourteen are state-supported.

All responding libraries offer the public open access to their library building without charge, with only Virginia Union University (Richmond) and Randolph-Macon Women's College (Lynchburg) requiring an application process. All responding libraries also offer free reference service to those admitted to their libraries.

Sixteen respondents (47%) do not offer online searching services to their public users, including some who do offer this service to their primary clientele. Of the eighteen (53%) academic libraries that do offer online searching to public users, all except two charge the public the online cost of the search. Old Dominion University (Norfolk) and Virginia Commonwealth University (Richmond) add a $25 and $20 dollar fee respectively to the online cost of the search.

Twenty-one (60%) of the responding libraries allow members of the general public to borrow materials from their collections without charge. It is interesting to note that two-thirds of the privately-supported institutions offer free borrowing, but only half of the state-supported institutions do. Eight libraries (23%) allow the public to borrow for a fee. These fees range from five dollars at Virginia State University (Petersburg), William and Mary (Williamsburg) and Virginia Wesleyan (Norfolk) to a high of seven hundred dollars (this is a $500 base institutional fee plus $200 per faculty member) at George Mason University (Fairfax). It should be noted that George Mason offers a variety of fees based upon various affiliations of their users. Six of the eight libraries which charge for borrowing privileges are state-supported institutions and most of the eight are in heavily-populated areas. Six (17%) of the libraries surveyed do not offer borrowing privileges to the general public and only one of these, Norfolk State University, is a state-supported institution.

Eighteen (53%) of the responding libraries do not offer interlibrary loan services to the general public. Of the sixteen which do offer this, all are in non-urban areas, and seven offer this service without fee.

Each library that charges the public for any of these services was asked the purpose of their fees. Sixteen cited partial cost recovery, five cited full cost recovery, and four indicated that limiting use was at least part of their intent in charging the public.

(continued on next page)

IR053677

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Public Use

(continued from previous page)

Those that wished to limit use were all state-supported institutions in urban areas, where demand may be higher.

When asked how many members of the general public borrow materials directly from their collections, nine (30%) reported less than fifty, twelve (40%) reported between fifty and five hundred, and nine (30%) reported over one thousand public borrowers. Of the latter nine, Old Dominion (Norfolk) and the University of Virginia (Charlottesville) reported the greatest number, at approximately four thousand each.

Each surveyed library director was also asked to rank their most frequent types of non-primary users. By deriving mean figures for each category, they ranked in the following order: 1) students from other colleges or universities; 2) high school students; 3) business persons; 4) alumni; 5) public or private school teachers; and 6) recreational users. However, in looking for which category was most often ranked number one, "high school students" prevailed in eleven reporting libraries, leading all other categories.

Each library director was also asked if they offered any special privileges to corporate or business users. Only three apparently do: George Mason University (Fairfax), Old Dominion University (Norfolk), and the University of Richmond.

Only nine libraries (26%) claimed that use by the general public has had a negative impact, while twenty-six (74%) did not. Specific negative impacts cited included the following:

- books needed by their students checked out or lost (6)
- competition for infotrac or online catalog (3)
- disruptive behavior by high school students (3)
- delays in reference service for primary clientele (2)
- competition for the use of photocopy machines (1)
- crime (1).

Lately, the library directors were asked if they felt "obligated" to serve the general public and why. Twenty-six (74%) directors responding indicated yes and gave the following variety of reasons:

- good public relations (13)
- state-supported institution (7)
- distance of public library (5)
- government document depository (4)

Interestingly, two-thirds of the private institutions surveyed expressed a sense of obligation to serve the public, while two of the fourteen directors at state-supported institutions did not feel obligated to do so. It should be noted that these two libraries do provide some service to the general public, but apparently they do not feel compelled to do so. A number of private institutions share this point of view, offering service to the public, without feeling an obligation to do so.

Discussion

One might logically ask at this point if state-supported institutions in Virginia are indeed obligated to serve the general public. The *Code of Virginia* does not clearly express any such obligation. In fact, college or university libraries are scarcely mentioned at all there. The 1987 *Report of the Council of Higher Education on Academic Library Facility Needs in Virginia's Public System of Higher Education* (House Document No. 14)[3] provides space formulas for academic libraries based upon FTE student and faculty use with no mention of public use of these libraries. Is this meant to imply that there is no obligation to serve the general public? A 1986 House Bill (no. 752) proposed that "any public school teacher shall have access without charge to the services of any library in a public institution of higher education . . . in this Commonwealth."[4] However, after deferral for a year, this bill was defeated in the Committee on Education. Thus, it would appear that state-supported universities in Virginia are not *obligated* by the *state* to provide public access or service. However, one library director surveyed at such an institution has suggested that serving the general public in Virginia is somewhat of an unwritten law or expectation.

Advocates of limiting public access to state-supported academic libraries have suggested in the professional literature that athletic facilities and motor pools on college campuses are also tax-supported, yet members of the public are routinely denied access to those—why are college libraries different? Apparently they are, but not so much so that they have warranted specific legislation in Virginia.

Advantages of Public Use

Good community relations is the advantage most often cited in the literature, as it was by our survey respondents. Few libraries have cited, however, any tangible benefits (gifts, increased tax support, etc.) that "good community relations" has brought to their libraries. Although the growing alliance between industry and higher education may lead to special research funds or donations for the university, these donations are not always channeled directly into the library.

Another advantage that academic libraries might consider is the opportunity to take part in the development of a national information system which includes resource sharing and networking. If they are to reap the benefits of sharing resources, academic libraries cannot stay in isolation, but must offer equal access to their collections. The ACRL *Access Policy Guidelines* reminds academic libraries of the commitment that the American Library Association and the National Commission on Libraries have made to the availability of library and information services for all the people of the nation.[5]

One of the advantages more recently cited has been the extension of academic library services to high school students as a good recruitment tool. This indicates that at least some academic libraries are making a turnaround in their attitudes toward high school students. In 1967, Richard Quick reported,

> the community group that appears closest to being genuinely unwelcome in American college and university libraries is the high school student segment. Barely restrained emotions on the part of many respondents to our question on high school students indicate a substantial distaste for service to this group.[6]

In contrast, two 1986 articles promote

continued on next page

Public Use

(continued from previous page)

the use of academic libraries by high school students. In addition to recruiting, the authors see such efforts as a way for academic libraries to share in the overall national goal of preparing high school students for college level research.[7] [8] Interestingly, no Virginia academic library mentioned high school student recruitment as a motivation for providing public access in this survey.

Disadvantages of Public Use

E.J. Josey's 1967 report mentioned that "some librarians are concerned with loss of property and disservice to the college community."[9] Ralph Russell of Georgia State University has noted that there is a "heavy drain on reference and circulation services as well as library materials."[10] He continues, "our primary clientele are kept waiting while we serve off-campus users...the first mission for an academic library must be the support and the extension of our curriculum."[11]

Funding is not usually provided to academic libraries to give service to community users. In 1981, Duhrson stated that "no academic library was provided funds to provide services to those outside the college community although lip service is often paid to such service."[12] In 1986 LeClercq noted that

> funding for public universities is based on both the number of enrolled students and of degree-granting programs. Library funding is closely related to these two criteria. No additional funding is provided to research libraries to serve the general community. The expectation of service and access to collections, however, exists in the community.[13]

Determining the cost of these services to the general public is a difficult process, but the University of British Columbia has made some progress in this area. Their 1975 study showed that 16.7% of their total reference questions came from outside users and that these occupied 25.4% of their time spent on reference service.[14] The average amount of time spent on inquiries from their own users was 3.36 minutes, while an average of 5.92 minutes was spent on each question from visitors.[15] Finally, they estimated the annual cost to collections and service devoted to public use of their libraries at $510,000.[16] While the University of British Columbia's experience may not be typical of academic libraries in Virginia, some of their findings may be applicable here, although only two Virginia libraries in this survey cited a drain upon reference services as a negative impact.

Conclusion

By virtue of the varying circumstances of their operations, Virginia academic libraries now offer a wide variety of policies and feel a wide variety of effects of use by the general public. With the lack of a clear mandate from the state for state-supported institutions, and a variety of service missions among the private schools, there does not appear to be any prospect of uniformity among their policies concerning public use. It can be well argued that there should not be, as ACRL pointed out in their *Access Policy Guidelines*. Nonetheless, it may benefit the public in Virginia for all librarians to have better access to information about each academic library's policy concerning public use. Collection and dissemination of this information may be a worthwhile project for the State Library or the Virginia Library Association.

APPENDIX A
Survey Results
Public Use of Academic Libraries in Virginia

The questionnaire sent to 40 academic library directors had a total response of 35 out of 40 institutions or a response rate of 87%. The following answers are from the 35 responding libraries. 21 are private institutions while 14 are public institutions.

1. Is the general public granted open access to your library?
   Yes 33 (94%)
   No 2 (6 %)
2. a. Under what circumstances can the *general public* use reference services?
      Free 35 (100%)*
      Fee charged 0 (0%)
      Not offered 0 (0%)
      *Reference service is free at Virginia Union and Randolph-Macon Women's College once an application is approved.
   b. Under what circumstances can the general public use online searching services?
      Free 0 (0%)
      Fee charged 18 (53%)
      Not offered 16 (47%)
   c. Under what circumstances can the general public borrow materials?
      Free 21 (60%)
      Fee charged 8 (23%)
      Not offered 6 (17%)
   d. Under what circumstances can the general public use interlibrary loan services?
      Free 7 (21%)
      Fee charged 9 (26%)
      Not offered 18 (53%)
   e. If fees are charged, what is the purpose of the fees involved?
      Full Cost Recovery 5
      Partial Cost Recovery 16
      Profit 0
      Limit use 4
3. Approximately how many members of the general public borrow directly from your collection? (This does not include interlibrary loan.)
   0-50 9 (30%)
   50-500 12 (40%)
   500-1000 0
   over 1000 9 (30%)
4. Who are perceived as the most frequent outside users? (Ranked 1 to 7 with 1 being the highest)
   1 Students from other colleges and universities
   2 High School students
   3 Businesspersons
   4 Alumni
   5 Public/private school teachers
   6 Recreational users
   7 Other (included faculty emeriti, faculty-staff dependents, federal employees and general community users)
5. Does your library offer special privileges to corporate business users?
   Yes 3 (8%)
   No 32 (92%)
6. Has the general public had any negative impact on your primary users?

continued on next page

Public Use

(continued from previous page)

Yes 9 (26%)
No 26 (74%)

7. Do you feel obligated to serve the general public?
   Yes 26 (74%)
   No 9 (26%)
8. Is your college or university a private or public institution?
   Private 21 (60%)
   Public 14 (40%)

APPENDIX B

Participating Institutions

Averett College
Bluefield College
Bridgewater College
CBN University
Christopher Newport College
Clinch Valley College
College of William and Mary
Eastern Mennonite College
Ferrum College
George Mason University
Hampden Sydney College
Hollins College
James Madison University
Liberty University
Longwood College
Mary Baldwin College
Mary Washington College
Marymount University
Norfolk State University
Old Dominion University
Radford University
Randolph-Macon College
Randolph-Macon Women's College
Roanoke College
Saint Paul's College
Sweet Briar College
University of Richmond
University of Virginia
Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia Intermont College
Virginia Military Institute
Virginia State University
Virginia Union University
Virginia Wesleyan College
Washington and Lee University

Non-participating Institutions

Christendom College
Emory and Henry College
Hampton University
Lynchburg College
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Notes

1. Association of College and Research Libraries, "Access Policy Guidelines," *College and Reference Libraries News*, November, 1975. p. 322.
2. Association of College and Research Libraries, p. 322.
3. Virginia. General Assembly. House. *Report of the Council of Higher Education on Academic Library Facility Needs in Virginia's Public System of Higher Education.* (House Document no. 14) Prepared by John E. Molnar. Richmond, 1987, unpaged - see "Factors Affecting the Guideline."
4. Virginia. General Assembly. Session of 1986. House Bill No. 752. Richmond, 1986.
5. Judd, Blanche and Scheele, Barbara, "Community Use of Public Academic Libraries in New York State: A SUNY/CUNY Survey," *Bookmark*, Winter, 1984, pp. 126-130.
6. Quick, Richard C. "Community Use-Dealer's Choice," *College and Research Libraries*, May, 1967, pp. 187-88.
7. Thompson, Ronelle K.H. and Rhodes, Glenda T., "Recruitment: A role for the academic library," *College and Research Libraries News*, October, 1986 pp. 575-577.
8. LeClercq, Angie, "The Academic Library/High School Library Connection: Needs Assessment and Proposed Model," *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, March, 1986 pp. 12-18.
9. Josey, E.J. "Community Use of Academic Libraries: A Symposium" *College and Research Libraries*, May, 1967, p. 191
10. Russell, Ralph, "Services for Whom: A Search for Identity," *Tennessee Librarian*, Fall, 1979, p. 39.
11. Russell, pp. 39-40
12. Duhrsen, Lowell Russell, *Use of the New Mexico State University Library by High School Students in Las Cruces, New Mexico*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1981. p. 9.
13. LeClercq, p. 12.
14. Task Force on Extended Services, University of British Columbia, "Proposals on Library Service to the Non-UBC Community" in *Fees For Services*, SPEC Kit no. 74, 1981, p. 4
15. University of British Columbia, "TRIUL Survey of Reference Use" in *External User Services*, SPEC Kit no. 73, 1981, p. 46.
16. Task Force on Extended Services, p. 7.

Librarians. Leaders. ALA.

Join the American Library Association (ALA) to realize your leadership potential. ALA membership brings you American Libraries with over 100 monthly job listings, discounts on publications and graphics, reduced registration rates at ALA conferences, eligibility to vote and hold office and an excellent insurance plan. The dues are affordable—$35 for first time personal members, renewing members $70, students $18, non-salaried or retired librarians, $25, trustees and friends $32.

Yes, I will join!

☐ Enclosed is my check for $_____
☐ Charge my dues of $_____ to my
☐ VISA ☐ MasterCard
☐ American Express

Card number Exp Date

Signature

Type of Membership

Name

Home Address

City State Zip

Please send mail to ☐ Work ☐ Home Address

Additional information on ALA's divisions and round-tables and how to get the most from your membership will be sent with your membership card.

Send to: Membership Services, American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611, 312-944-6780.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE